



TEACHER READING



1. FASCISM



The Italian Benito Mussolini stands out as one of the founders of fascism. At the age of ten, teachers expelled him from school for stabbing another pupil in the hand. Four years later, he was suspended from school for stabbing another child. As a young man he also stabbed a girlfriend in the arm. His real conversion to the politics of violence would come in the First World War.

In May 1915, Italy joined the First World War on the side of the UK and France against Germany and Austria. The decision to enter the war had created much bitterness and while many liberals had hoped Italy would remain neutral, a group of right-wingers had made a secret agreement with the British to enter the war in return for colonial territories. For people like Mussolini, the liberals were traitors whose desire for peace made Italy weak

During the First World War, Mussolini urged Italians to fight and to wage a war of extermination against the Germans. Italian politicians, he said, who did not want to fight should be given 'five revolver bullets in the stomach'. Mussolini hoped that fighting the Germans and Austrians would lead to Italy becoming a great imperial power. He wanted as well to make other nations respect and fear Italy as a great power. He would start by seizing control of the Mediterranean islands of Corsica and Malta and towns in Croatia such as Split and Dubrovnik. As the war developed, he became more extremely patriotic and said that those who turned their backs on Italy were turning their backs on their mother. He also began to argue that soldiers who had risked their lives represented the best of Italy and those who stayed at home represented the worst of Italy. In November 1917, the Italians were doing badly in the war with five million Italians fighting, half a million killed and a further half a million disabled. The German and Austrian armies had also occupied part of Italian territory. To help win through to victory Mussolini called for total national unity and for those who were less determined to fight the war such as socialists and other 'traitors' to be 'treated without mercy'. He demanded a 'trenchocracy'— political rule by soldiers who had fought in the trenches. Mussolini also turned against socialists who put workers' wages and conditions before the victory of the nation. Now Mussolini demanded a dictatorship in which a man who could control Italians 'with violence if required' should take power and concentrate on winning the war.

Mussolini brought many of these ideas together in his fascist movement which was born from the trenches of the First World War. Mussolini's fascists felt they had fought in the war and suffered danger. They also believed their sacrifice should be rewarded with political power. The *Arditi* formed an important group within this fascist movement. They were special assault troops who saw more face-to-face combat in the war and they believed that violence was a good thing that demonstrated the manliness, superiority and patriotism of those who attacked the nation's 'enemies'. In March 1919, Mussolini helped form the first *fasciso de combattimento* (fighting group). It called for workers returning from the trenches to be given special treatment as combatants. The *Arditi* helped Mussolini's armed units known as squads of *fasci*.



They soon played a prominent role in the difficult times Italy passed through after the war. The country suffered high inflation and strikes for higher wages and particularly by poor farmers. Many of those on strike were supporters of the Italian socialist party and Mussolini's fascists saw them as traitors and beat up strikers, attacked socialist party offices and broke up socialist printing presses. They killed up to 3,000 opponents. The violence brought rewards and the fascists began to win a lot of support and especially from landowners and big business associations. The socialist party began to lose a great deal of power and influence.

Mussolini's fascists also became involved in violence abroad. They disliked the division of territory after the end of the First World War and felt the Italians had not been given the rewards they deserved for fighting with the UK and France. Mussolini's men helped occupy the city of Fiume which they felt should have been given to them. Mussolini also called for the Versailles Treaty to be re-written and demanded that the city of Trieste become fully Italian.

In October 1922, Mussolini became the leader of Italy after his fascists seized government buildings in large parts of the country. Mussolini was using the threat of violence and potential civil war to force the king to appoint him to office. With armed fascists preparing to march on Rome, the king gave way and Mussolini became prime minister. During his first years in power, Mussolini kept his armed squads to make sure he could force the king and others to do as he wished. The socialist MP Giacomo Matteotti heavily criticised this fascist violence in a speech in May 1924. On 10 June 1924, a group of fascists kidnaped Matteotti and beat him to death. The killing caused a scandal and the renewed threat of civil war which continued to lead the king to support Mussolini. Just as at home, abroad Mussolini used violence to achieve his goals and created excuses to attack other countries. In August 1923, he pretended that Italians were in great danger in Corfu, in Greece, and sent ships to bombard and troops to occupy the island. Mussolini then boasted he had used violence to teach the world a lesson about Italian power.

In 1935, Mussolini went further and invaded Abyssinia—present-day Ethiopia and at the time one of the last places in Africa not colonised by Europeans. The invasion formed part of Mussolini's plan to mobilise the Italian nation for total war and reflected his belief that violence should be used to seize more territory for Italy and to make Italy a great and respected power. Mussolini also felt he could get away with this violent occupation because the UK and France had not stood up to Hitler. He declared 'No one in Europe will raise difficulties, if the military situation is resolved speedily'. The Italians used planes, bombing raids and modern weapons against the badly armed Ethiopians. They also sent 400,000 men to fight. Mussolini's son Bruno was among them and he left this description of a bombing raid

'After the bombracks were emptied I began throwing bombs by hand...It was most amusing...I had to aim carefully at the straw roof and only succeeded at the third shot. The wretches who were inside, seeing their roof burning, jumped out and ran off like mad. Surrounded by a circle of fire about five thousand Abyssinians came to a sticky end. It was like hell.'



The First World War and the revolution in Germany which followed it shaped Adolf Hitler. When the conflict broke out in August 1914, Hitler immediately volunteered for army service. He particularly wanted to fight the British who he felt had a large empire and prevented Germany from gaining its own colonies. His job on the frontline was to run with orders from the generals to the front-line troops. Hitler later said that he 'looked death in the eye' every day and during the Battle of the Somme he was injured by a shell explosion. During the war, Hitler frequently felt outnumbered by British troops and soldiers from the British empire—Canadians and Indians in particular. This made him feel that Germany was surrounded by a 'world of enemies'.

At the end of the war, he was sent to Munich where he continued to serve in the army for another two years. It was here that he learned of the terms of the Versailles Treaty and he began to make political speeches. He continually criticised the UK and the USA who wanted to prevent Germany becoming a rival world power. He particularly hated the USA because of its many big businesses he said were controlled by Jews. He also turned against Germans on the home front who he claimed had not supported the war effort and made the sacrifices that front-line soldiers had done. Most of all, he blamed Jews in Germany, a tiny fraction of the population, for betraying the nation. After the war, these 'Jews', he said, had tried to lead a revolution and the Nazi Party, which he had helped form, needed to win Germans over to the cause of saving Germany rather than supporting 'Jewish' revolution. He claimed too that if Germany could establish its own colonies it would have more soldiers and could become a major world power.

Hitler developed a series of policies he presented as 'cures' for Germany's problems. At home Jews and other 'non-Germans' would need to be rooted out. Germany needed to secure 'living space' in eastern Europe where strong and healthy Germans could find a life rather than by emigrating to the USA. Hitler also began to argue that nations, like animals, were in a struggle for existence in which only the strongest would survive. According to Hitler, the Germans belonged to the Aryan race which was superior to other races. If Germans had children with people from other races, he claimed, their offspring would be racially inferior, weaker and in danger of being defeated in the struggle for existence by other stronger races. He also felt that if the weak or ill were allowed to reproduce, the nation would become less strong. Hitler further believed that German Aryans were destined to rule the world but to triumph would have to defeat the Soviet Union which he saw as populated by racially inferior Slavs and Jews who were taking up German 'living space'.

To win German living space, Hitler first wanted to conquer Europe and create a Greater Germany. He then wanted to invade the Soviet Union and later acquire colonies in Central and Western Africa. Once France and Russia had been eliminated, Hitler felt he could move on to defeat the UK and the USA, although because the USA was so powerful this war would only come once Germany had made itself much stronger.

2. APPEASEMENT

How do you settle differences with your opponents? Three immediate ways come to mind. You can give your opponent what they want (give in); you can stand up to them and fight them, or you can negotiate and give way in some areas and hold your ground in others. The aim here is to reduce tensions and the prospect of conflict. Appeasement is largely this last option. In many ways, this sounds like a reasonable approach, but when it comes to dealing with dictators politicians in our own age tend to be very critical of trying to negotiate and compromise and in large measure because of the way the 1930s are remembered.

Presidents John F. Kennedy, George W. Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair have all criticised 1930s appeasement. Tony Blair famously declared in February 2003, just before the invasion of Iraq, that 'The lesson we learnt [in the 1930s] was that if, confronted by a threat, we back away because we assume that our good and peaceful intentions are matched by those threatening us, the threat only grows and at a later time has to be confronted again, but in far more deadly and dangerous form'.

One thing to bear in mind before we criticise appeasement, however, is the strength of the countries involved. This is similar to facing a bully. You might decide you should give in because you are not strong enough to fight them, this is particularly likely if you are facing more than one bully or opponent; or you might decide you are as strong or stronger than them and you should fight them. Alternatively, you might feel just strong enough to negotiate and give them some of what they want so that they don't bully you any longer.

When it comes to negotiations between states they might have several things they can offer one another or compromise upon. They might offer each other more trade, or less trade; they can also offer each other territory. More aggressively they might threaten to impose sanctions, for example to deny another country the right to buy oil. They can also threaten to build up their armed forces or even take limited military action, like a bombing raid, or threaten to declare war. It is worth remembering that these types of appeasement are not just to reduce tensions. They can be designed to buy time to build military strength and prepare for war or to avoid the economic damage and political unrest a war would create at home.

Why and How did the British Follow an Appeasement Policy in the 1930s?

Neville Chamberlain stands out as the British prime minister most closely associated with appeasement in the 1930s. His successor Winston Churchill later blamed him for the Second World War when he declared that 'there was never a war in history easier to prevent by timely action'. Churchill believed that Chamberlain should have confronted Hitler and prevented him from gaining confidence and strength by countering his aggressive take-over of various European countries with force. Chamberlain, however, feared the United Kingdom and his government was not strong enough to take on Hitler's forces.





Chamberlain was afraid that the United Kingdom faced too many enemies. Mussolini was threatening British control of the Mediterranean, Japan was threatening the British Empire in Asia and Hitler posed a threat across the European continent. The Japanese had invaded part of China in 1931 and this brought them closer to British-controlled India. The Italians had also invaded Ethiopia in 1935 and threatened British colonies in Africa. In 1936, the Italians, Germans and Japanese signed the Anti-Comintern Pact that brought them together as potential allies against the United Kingdom.

It is also the case that Chamberlain did not want to ally with the Soviet Union. This meant that he lost the opportunity to build an alliance of France, the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom against Hitler and Mussolini. Chamberlain believed that communism posed a bigger threat than Nazi Germany. More than this, he claimed that the Soviet Union was trying to push the United Kingdom into a war with Germany. His choice to avoid a pact with the Soviet Union meant that it became difficult to force Germany into a war on two fronts. It also left the French isolated because they wanted to ally with the Soviets against their biggest enemy: Germany.

At home, Chamberlain wanted to ensure that the government only spent as much money as it received in taxes. He particularly feared that heavy spending on weapons would lead to higher taxes, an unhappy public and political unrest. Instead of building new weapons factories he wanted to build new homes for people. At the same time, he knew he had to build up the British navy against the Japanese and to build up the Royal Air Force to counter growing Nazi airpower. Many business groups also valued the trade relations with Germany and did not want to lose money. Chamberlain believed as well that fast and expensive re-armament would turn voters against his party, the Conservatives. It was a difficult situation and Chamberlain decided that he would re-arm slowly without spending too much money at once.

Chamberlain also believed that Hitler could be won over by giving him some of what he wanted. Like many in the United Kingdom, Chamberlain believed that Germany had been treated unfairly by the Treaty of Versailles which formally ended the First World War. The list of German grievances was long: three million German speakers were assigned to Czechoslovakia in a region called the Sudetenland. The Treaty also required Germany to keep its border area with France in the Rhineland free of military forces. The Treaty also prevented Germany from uniting with German-speaking Austria. Chamberlain dangerously misjudged Hitler and believed that once some of his demands to re-write the Treaty of Versailles had been granted, he would become peaceful. This ignored Hitler's plans to use violence to become a major world power.

How did Hitler and Mussolini Exploit Appeasement?

Hitler gained power in January 1933 and soon began to push against the restrictions placed on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles. In October, 1933 he withdrew Germany from the League of Nations because, he said, it stopped Germany from making weapons and building up its armed forces. None of the strongest countries, like the UK and France, protested or imposed any sanctions. Hitler had feared a stronger reaction and was pleased with his success. In March 1935, Hitler introduced conscription; he



had broken the Treaty of Versailles once more. The members of the League of Nations, however, did not criticise Hitler because they did not want to put him off re-joining the League. In June 1935, the British signed an agreement with Hitler that allowed Germany to build up its navy, which again broke the Treaty of Versailles. The British did so because they believed this would ease German demands and forestall conflict with Germany when they also had to deal with growing Japanese naval power and the because they hoped to save money by limiting the German navy and the British need to have more ships than the Germans.

Mussolini watched carefully as the British offered concession after concession to Germany, which made him believe he could force the British into granting him concessions. Mussolini began to demand control of Ethiopia in 1935 and his forces invaded the country in October 1935. In December, the British and the French worked with Mussolini on the Hoare-Laval Pact which granted much of Ethiopia to the Italians. A public outcry meant the Pact was never enforced, but the British and French had shown their willingness to compromise and no country stood up to Mussolini who had conquered Ethiopia by May 1936 when the Italians had captured the capital, Addis Ababa.

Hitler felt emboldened by Mussolini's success and felt that there was no danger now that France and the UK could isolate him by allying with Mussolini. On 7 March 1936, Hitler sent German soldiers into the Rhineland, breaking the Treaty of Versailles in what Winston Churchill later descried as 'the last chance of arresting Hitler's ambitions without a serious war'. The French, Churchill said, should have used the hundreds of thousands of soldiers in their army to teach Hitler a lesson. In many ways, Churchill had a point because the German army had not yet gained the soldiers and troops that Hitler's rapid re-armament would bring it a few years later. The French had also made a mistake when they told Hitler in February 1936 that they would only respond at first diplomatically if the Germans sent soldiers into the Rhineland. Hitler also knew from the Ethiopian crisis that the British and other powers were too fearful of war to intervene in the Rhineland. The British in particular felt they had too many enemies, too weak an army and not enough money to fight Germany. The French too had a weak army and had spent less and less money on the military each year from 1930 to 1934 at a time when French national income had fallen by up to 11 per cent.

Hitler now became more and more emboldened. In January 1937, he removed Germany's signature from the Versailles Treaty and in March 1938 he made Austria part of Germany. In September 1938, Chamberlain signed an agreement with Hitler that allowed the Germans to take over the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia. In March 1939, Hitler took over Czechoslovakia and in September 1939 he sparked the Second World War when he invaded Poland.

3. GOVERNMENT REPOSSES TO THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR



The Importance of the Spanish Civil War for World Peace and Security

In July 1936, a number of army officers grouped around General Francisco Franco rebelled against the elected democratic government of the Spanish Second Republic. Franco and his men wanted to get rid of democracy and create a regime similar to those in Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany. Like these two fascist rulers, Franco wanted to close down parliament, shut down political parties, ban independent trade unions, as well as imprison and execute political opponents. Like Mussolini and Hitler, Franco had also become cruel by fighting in the army and believed in using violence to make Spain a strong country. He hoped that Spain under his control would be able to unite with Mussolini and Hitler to fight against liberal democracies like the UK and France and to battle the Soviet Union.

At first it looked like General Franco would not be successful because ordinary people in many of Spain's big cities like Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia and Bilbao fought army rebels in the streets and put down the rebellion. This meant that the rebellion tended to be successful in smaller cities and in farming areas. Franco faced another big problem: his most important troops were based in northern Morocco across the Mediterranean sea. These troops were trained and experienced professionals who had learned how to fight by battling against local people in Spain's small colony in Morocco who were struggling for their political independence. Franco, however, did not control the navy because ordinary sailors had stopped officers from joining the revolt. This meant his soldiers were stuck in Morocco and the only way to get them across the sea would be by plane and only Mussolini and Hitler had the air transport and political will Franco needed.

From the very start, then, the Spanish Civil War became much more than a conflict between Spaniards and instead became a vital part of the international tensions between fascism, democracy and the Soviet Union. This is why other countries were watching the situation in Spain and thought carefully about which nations could win an advantage and put others in danger. The French looked on particularly closely. They feared Germany most of all because it was a powerful country with which they shared a border and the French knew that Hitler might want to invade their homeland. The chance that Franco could seize power in Spain and ally with Germany made the country's southern border vulnerable as well and defending this flank would mean sending troops to guard the south: soldiers who could have been stationed on the border with Germany. The Soviet Union was also following events in Spain. The Soviets feared Germany as much as the French did because Hitler had made no secret of his desire to destroy the USSR. This explains why the Soviets had signed a treaty in 1936 with the French to help one another if war broke out. The two countries signed the treaty just after Hitler announced he was going to make the German army bigger. Accordingly, the USSR wanted to defend France and prevent Franco from taking power. The French

knew, however, that the support of the British was vital because without British troops to assist them, the French feared that Hitler's powerful army would defeat them. This meant that before supporting the Second Republic in Spain, the French would consult with the British on what they should do.

How the British Government Responded to the Spanish Civil War

Spain was an important country for the United Kingdom. One reason, was that Spain shares a border with Gibraltar which was the UK's major naval base protecting the entrance to the Mediterranean Sea. This base really mattered because most of the British ships heading to India and beyond passed through the Mediterranean. Spain also exported a lot of food like oranges to the United Kingdom and the British owned important iron mines in Spain. These were important factors that weighed the minds of British political leaders when the Spanish Civil War began.

The national government, dominated by the Conservative Party, also worried about the conflict drawing in countries like Nazi Germany and France which would support opposing sides—a danger that risked a major war breaking out. Another risk was that Hitler and Mussolini could become closer allies if they both intervened to support General Franco. The British feared they were not strong enough to fight a war in Europe and defend their empire in Asia. They also did not want to raise taxes to pay for rapid re-armament and nobody wanted a conflict like the First World War to start again.

The national government also made a series of disputed political decisions. The prime minister Stanley Baldwin ordered his government not to interfere on the side of the Russians. Many British politicians and officials also believed that the struggle in Spain was between those like General Franco who wanted to put down a revolution and keep the Soviets out of Spain and a weak government that would soon be replaced by revolutionary groups. They badly misjudged the situation because the Spanish government actually wanted to suppress a revolution and to protect democracy. The British position also made life difficult for the French who wanted a closer relationship with the Soviet Union to defend themselves from Nazi Germany but who also needed British support to stop Hitler invading France. More than this, British leaders made a mistake when they sympathised with General Franco because he was likely to back Hitler and the Nazi leader had ambitions to start a war in Europe.

With all these considerations in mind, the British played a crucial role in creating the Non-Intervention Agreement in August 1936 which twenty-seven countries eventually signed. On the surface, the Non-Intervention Agreement (NIA) was a simple effort to contain the conflict in Spain and prevent other countries from being drawn into the Civil War. In reality, however, it deeply favoured General Franco at the expense of the Spanish government. One reason for this is that the Spanish government had the legal right in international law to buy weapons from other countries but the NIA prevented them from doing so. A second reason is that the NIA treated the two Spanish sides as if they were equal, but in fact one side represented the elected government and the other side was rebelling against the legitimate government. Most importantly of all, the British knew that the Germans and the Italians were sending massive amounts



of weapons and soldiers to Spain but did not protest for fearing of upsetting Hitler and Mussolini. The result was that Franco was able to defeat the government because he had many more weapons and much more ammunition than the government side. In this sense, the Non-Intervention Agreement became a form of intervention that allowed Franco to win the war and further encouraged Hitler that the British and French would not stop his efforts to build up his military power.



How Mussolini and Hitler Responded to the Spanish Civil War

In July 1936, Hitler was feeling confident after he had sent soldiers into the Rhineland and the French had failed to stand up to him. Hitler had even ordered his troops to withdraw if the French resisted. Before the Civil War, Hitler had not paid much attention to Spain as he focused mostly on France, eastern Europe and the USSR. He had, however, heard of Francisco Franco who had become famous fighting a vicious war in Spain's colony in northern Morocco and had become one of Europe's youngest generals. Franco's fame was to pay him back richly when he managed to send a representative of the Nazi Party who lived in Morocco to meet with Hitler. Johannes Bernhardt quickly flew to Germany and met Hitler on 25 July 1936. In fact, the German Foreign Ministry was reluctant to become involved in Spain because its official feared becoming drawn into a war with the UK. Hitler, however, was famous for making decisions on the spot and without discussing matters with anyone else. When Bernhardt met him, Hitler was very excited because he had just been to a very emotional concert. Bernhardt asked Hitler to send ten planes to Morocco to transport Franco's best troops to Spain. Hitler decided to double the number of aircraft to twenty. He also sent ninety-five pilots. Hitler wanted to make sure Franco could win and saw backing the Spanish general as a way of weakening the Soviet Union and France. Hermann Göring, the head of the German air force, also wanted to try out new planes and tactics in battle. The Germans also later realised they could secure lots of minerals like iron in Spain to help them build up their army.

The Germans wanted to keep their involvement as secret as possible but they openly transported 14,000 soldiers to Spain with 500 tons of equipment. The German involvement in Spain grew over time. An entire air-force unit known as the Condor Legion with 119 planes operated in Spain. Here they developed bombing techniques and way of offering support from the air for ground troops that would be used to great effect when Germany invaded Poland, France and the Soviet Union in the Second World War. In Spain, Hitler and the Nazis were not just gaining confidence but also skills. The Germans learned how to bomb major cities and Madrid, Valencia and Barcelona were all heavily bombed to great loss of life. Most of the town of Guernica was destroyed by bombing from the air. The Condor Legion gave Franco his biggest advantage. Aside from transporting key troops to Spain, the Legion destroyed 320 government planes and 60 ships.

Mussolini took a much more cautious approach than Hitler and his actions show that he had initially feared the British and French but soon learned he did not need to worry very much about these two powers. From 21 July, Franco supporters were in Rome trying to persuade Mussolini to send planes to support the rebels. Mussolini refused to help a number of times before Italian planes finally left on 30 July. By this point, Mussolini knew that the French had decided not to help the Spanish government and he also knew that Hitler had decided to help General Franco. He was also aware that the British were keen not to become involved in Spain and that the British were trying

to build good relations with Italy. Mussolini also had political motives: he wanted to see a Fascist-style government in Spain and he wanted the chance to build airbases in Spain and particularly in the country's islands like Mallorca which would help Italy control the Mediterranean and push out the British from the region. Mussolini also loved war and hoped to prove Italian greatness by intervening decisively in the Spanish Civil War. The Italians eventually sent huge numbers of troops and supplies. They frequently had up to 70,000 men on the ground and Italian planes took part in 728 bombing raids and dropped over 11,000 bombs. They also sent 150 tanks and 10,000 machine guns. Italian troops played a crucial role in conquering Málaga in February 1937 and Bilbao in June 1937.



4. POPULAR RESPONSES TO THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

Why People from Around the World Volunteered to Fight in the International Brigades

Around 35,000 volunteers from over fifty countries volunteered to fight for the Spanish government against General Franco and his fascist allies Mussolini and Hitler. At least 85 African Americans from the United States of America volunteered to fight. From the United Kingdom over 2,300 people volunteered and around 20 per cent of them died and nearly all of them received at least one wound. Why would people risk their lives fighting in a civil war in a far-away country? The majority of British volunteers were ordinary people who worked in jobs like mining, transport and building. Walter Gregory was typical of this kind of volunteer. He grew up in Lincoln among many poor people who often could not afford to provide their children with shoes and his father also struggled to find well paid work. This was one reason why his father joined the Woodworkers' Union. After his father campaigned for a fair wage, employers in the area put his name on a list of people not to be given a job and he never really worked again after this experience. When Walter left school, he found a job in an office and because he felt so upset about his father's experience and the poor pay and living conditions he saw around him he quickly joined a trade union which he thought could help bring about better pay. After a while, he joined the Workers' Education Association. This organisation provided ordinary people with night classes and the chance to learn the skills often taught at university. It particularly offered the opportunity for workers to think about issues newspapers presented in simple and overly dramatic ways. Workers also learned to develop their own views and arguments. He benefited from this education and began to take a strong interest in the news and as he watched Italy and Germany become more and more aggressive. What he saw led him to give up on the pacifism he had supported after the horrors of the First World War and he started to think that, in his words, fascism would 'have to be met with force if its triumphant progress was to be arrested'. This is why he left the 'No More War Movement'.



Increasingly, Walter became involved with the National Unemployed Workers' Movement because he felt the government treated unemployed people with 'callous disdain'. As he became drawn into demonstrations, he became increasingly angry and especially when he saw entire mining communities reduced to total poverty. At this time, he also became a strong opponent of the British Union of Fascists who he thought would close down trade unions, as the Nazis had done in Germany, and put people like him in prison. When he protested against a fascist meeting, a British fascist hit him over the head with a chair and broke his nose. Accordingly, when the war broke out in Spain he saw it not as an internal matter for Spaniards but as part of the struggle between democracy and fascism that he had begun to fight in the United Kingdom.

James Yates lived a very different life but his motives were not so very different to those of Walter Gregory. James was born in Mississippi in the south of the United States to an African-American family. His grandmother had been fifteen when slavery came to an end in the United States and the family still lived in a log cabin when he came into the world. In the small town where he grew up there were no schools for Black children and he had to walk ten miles to school and ten miles back, but the school was only open for five months of the year because the local cotton producers wanted the children to work for the rest of the year. While he was growing up, he also learned of the murder of five men and four women in the nearby town of Shubuta by the Ku Klux Klan: an organisation that terrified Blacks through violence and murder. At thirteen James left school and worked as a labourer, but only received a voucher to spend in the shop with high prices owned by his employer: while white labourers received cash to spend where they wanted. Eventually, James managed to move to Chicago where he lived in a community with many other African-Americans. Here he came into contact with a variety of Black political organisations such as the Marcus Garvey Movement that proposed Blacks could escape racism by going to live in Africa. In Chicago, James got a job working on the railways as a waiter but when the great depression hit in the early 1930s he was left without a job. He soon became involved with people like the African-American Oliver Law who was campaigning to help the unemployed and groups like miners who were also campaigning for better living conditions. He found he now had a lot in common with Black and white workers and said 'I felt as one with these people, Black and white. I was part of their hopes, their dreams, as they were part of mine'. When he got his job back on the railways, James soon joined a union. Many Black and white union members were becoming involved in the struggle for better living conditions and saw fascism as a threat to trade union rights, political freedom and world peace. This is why James became involved in the League against War and Fascism. Blacks in particular were horrified at Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia: one of the few African countries that until then had not been turned into a colony of European powers. When the Civil War started in Spain, James was clear that Hitler could not be appeased and the Spanish struggle was his struggle. He declared that when the Spanish government won the election. 'It was the kind of victory that would have brought Black people to the top levels of government if such an election had been won in the USA. A Black man would be Governor of Mississippi...Spain was the perfect example for the world I dreamed of.'

Explain some of the Successes of the International Brigades



The International Brigades made a crucial difference during the Spanish Civil War. The Brigades made one of their biggest contributions in Madrid between November 1936 and February 1937. Until that point, Franco with his troops from Morocco, the support of Mussolini's soldiers and Nazi airpower had taken over huge parts of Spain. In the summer of 1936 he had moved from the south up to the area just outside Madrid: the capital of Spain in the very centre of the country. By November 1936, his troops had managed to surround the capital and a terrible siege was under way. Ordinary people in the capital were running out of food, were suffering terrible bombing raids and feared that if they were captured they would be shot like thousands had been when Franco took over towns such as Badajoz in the summer of 1936. In this desperate situation, keeping people's spirits up mattered almost as much as obtaining trained soldiers.

The International Brigades offered both soldiers and a boost for morale. By the time Franco had Madrid surrounded, the International Brigades had managed to send soldiers to Spain, train them and get them to the capital. The sight of 2,100 of them marching along Madrid's central Gran Vía street on 8 November 1936, brought great hope to the city's defender who were worried after the government had fled to Valencia a few days earlier because leaders felt Madrid was about to fall. The Brigades came with the experienced Soviet officer General Kleber who set up his headquarters just outside the city centre in the grounds of Madrid's main university. It was here Franco hoped to attack and rush into the city, but he came up against volunteers from countries as varied as Hungary, Yugoslavia, Belgium, France and Greece who were all determined to stop fascism. He also came across inexperienced Spanish soldiers who helped the international volunteers beat back attack after attack. On the government side newspapers and the radio boasted that Madrid would not fall and that the International Brigades had saved the city.

The siege was still in place and the International Brigades next made a difference at Jarama: a river which flowed through a valley to the south-east of Madrid. Over the river from Franco's lines stood the road that linked Madrid to Valencia and a key target for Franco's men. On 11 February 1937, Franco launched his attack and was met by the International Brigades and some Spanish government units who suffered heavy casualties. The 630 men of British Battalion were to play a big role. The British held some high ground from where they used machine guns to kill Franco's troops as they attacked. The British volunteers held on through several terrible attacks and over 150 were killed and only 80 men in the British Battalion escaped injury, but the road remained in government hands and Franco knew it would be difficult to capture Madrid.

In March 1937, 2,124 Italian volunteers found revenge against Mussolini whose fascist regime had forced them into exile and killed many of their comrades. The battle took place just over thirty-five miles to the east of Madrid when 41,000 Italian troops tried to launch an attack on Spain's capital: now the world symbol of resistance against fascism and aggressive war. It was yet another attempt by the Franco side to take the capital



and it failed. It began with a surprise attack in early March 1937 near Guadalajara: a city just over forty miles to the north east of Madrid. The Italians hoped to capture an important road that led to the capital. Mussolini's forces expected to reach Madrid in a week, but they came up against the now experienced International Brigades who had fought at Madrid and Jarama. They also had the slogan 'Spain is not Abyssinia [Ethiopia]' ringing in their ears. Fog, rain and snow bogged down the Italian advance and their backed up lorries became easy targets and Mussolini's men struggled first against International Brigade units that slowed their attack and then by Spanish government units which attacked them. Their victory led anti-fascist Italians to shout 'Guadalajara today, Italy tomorrow!'

In July 1937, 7,000 international volunteers joined the attack on Franco's forces surrounding Madrid at Brunete: a town fifteen miles to the east of the Spanish capital. It was in this battle that the African American from Chicago Oliver Law would become the first Black to command white US troops in battle. The government forces quickly captured the town of Brunete. The Brigades went on to take other villages nearby with Bulgarians, British, Spaniards, US, Canadian and Yugoslav volunteers all taking part in the fighting. As they pursued Franco's men, Oliver Law would not keep his head down and a stray bullet hit him and he died shortly afterwards. Franco's men now seized the advantage and began to send large numbers of German and Italian planes to the battle. The battle showed how non-intervention damaged the Spanish government and favoured Franco because the Spanish general had hundreds of planes in the air above Brunete and vastly outnumbered the government forces. The Germans perfected techniques for spotting government troops from the air and for machine gunning troops from the air. They also grew more skilled in flattening government positions with heavy bombs while Nazi planes also dive-bombed retreating troops. By late July, Franco had recaptured Brunete. The British volunteers paid a particularly high price for their fight against fascism: over 70 men were killed and just 68 remained ready for battle from the original 331 who had taken part in the battle.

Explain the Connection between the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War

The International Brigades lost the fight against fascism in Spain but victory against Hitler and Mussolini came in 1945 when the allies defeated the two major fascist powers. In this sense, the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War represent the same conflict: the war against fascism. There are more connections between the two struggles and particularly between the people who fought and the tactics they used.

The Nazis saw Spain as a laboratory for testing out their air force. With the lessons from Spain in mind, the Nazis set up special air-force units of dive bombers and ground-attack planes to support army operations on the ground. The Germans used these tactics in Bilbao in Spain in June 1937 and would deploy them again in September 1939 against Poland and in May 1940 against France. In Spain, the Germans also lost more planes in night flying and in bad weather than in combat and made huge efforts to improve training and the use of weather forecasts. The Germans further made great advances in aerial photography which they used to discover the position

and movement of government soldiers. This information proved crucial in developing techniques for the mass bombing of government troops. The Germans also perfected the mass destruction of towns without regard to civilian losses. This happened in Guernica in April 1937 and would later be used on cities in the United Kingdom such as London and Coventry. The Nazis further developed the technique of the air-lift when they transported Franco's troops across the Mediterranean.

Two German officials in Spain later played a prominent role in the Second World War. Hugo Sperrle was head of the Condor Legion and Wolfram von Richthofen served as his chief of staff. Sperrle led the Nazi Blitz on London and later took charge of German air defences against British aircraft attacking Germany. Wolfram van Richthofen commanded the German air force's air-support units in the Second World, took command in the Battle of Stalingrad and in 1943 became the second youngest officer promoted to Field Marshal in German History. Soviet officials in Spain also played important roles in the Second World War such as General Walter, Karol Świerczewski—a Polish and Soviet general, who assumed control of the Polish Second Army in the Battle for Berlin.

Many former members of the International Brigades also played important roles in the Second World War. Around 250 Yugoslavs fought in the resistance against Germany in their country and 29 rose to become generals. In Italy too half the returning International Brigade veterans joined the resistance. One of them, Aldo Lampredi, was among those who killed Mussolini in April 1945. In France, former members of the International Brigades played an important role in the resistance too here they worked with Spanish exiled soldiers who helped to capture large parts of southern France and especially in the area around Toulouse. In the United States, the founder of the Office for Strategic Service, a forerunner of the CIA, Bill Donovan, employed former members of the International Brigades to form links with resistance units. These included Bill Aalto who had worked behind Franco's lines in the Spanish Civil War and became involved in training operatives for secret missions behind Nazi lines in the Second World War.

